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City Ballroom or Assembly Room(s) (Municipal Building)
150 Duke of Gloucester Street
Annapolis
Anne Arundel County
Maryland

HABS No. MD-41

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

America's City Halls Project

Annapolis, Maryland

Name: City Ballroom or Assembly Room(s)*

Present name; Municipal Building

Location: 150 Duke of Gloucester Street,
Annapolis, Maryland (Anne Arundel County)

Present Owner, Occupant and Use: City of Annapolis, municipal offices.

Significance: The present Municipal Building incorporates most of the original City Ballroom / Assembly Room and the attached Revenue Office (all c.1767) in its building envelope, and occupies the site of the mid 18th Century Market House. The Ballroom was used as a legislative hall during the construction of the Maryland State House (1772) and traditionally is the "building in which Gen. Washington was entertained at dinner by the Congress of the United States on the 20th December, 1783". After the close of the Civil War and the alterations and additions detailed below were completed, separate rooms were set aside for the exclusive use of the city, while the Ballroom was still used for various public functions—dances, lectures, concerts and exhibitions.

Architecturally, the 1974 restoration of the front facade has returned the structure to its 1867 appearance. Italianate in design, the Municipal Building, especially the northwest section, is one of the more important examples of its period and style in the Annapolis National Landmark Historic District.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. The original Ballroom and Proprietary or Revenue Office was constructed between 1767-68. Two lots were acquired for the structure, the first (90'x 33', with an additional 6' in length added in the same month) conveyed by B. Tasker to Governor Horatio Sharpe on December 24, 1766, the second (20'x 33') southeast of the first purchased from Tasker by Frederick, Lord Baltimore on March 25, 1768. The total cost was £ 43/10/-. (Deeds BB 3/521, 643 and Deeds IB 1/29)

* The terms Ballroom, Ball Room and Assembly Room(s) were used interchangeably during the 18th and 19th Centuries.

2. The architect for the 1767-68 construction is unknown, and given the size and scale of the building there probably was no architect as such. Builder's handbooks and other publications from England were used extensively by carpenters in Annapolis during this period. Architects for the 1867 alterations and additions (see below) were Dixon and Davis. (Dixon was probably Thomas Dixon (b.? d.?) an architect living in Baltimore at this time. Davis was possibly Francis E. Davis (1839-4/1921) also of Baltimore who practiced in this part of Maryland until 1914).
3. The Ballroom was built by the Annapolis carpenter Edward Maw, who received £ 106/10/7 of the total cost of £ 344 for the structure. (Maw was a well known craftsman of the period, active in large scale construction in Annapolis). Wells and Gardiner were contractors for the 1867 alterations and additions.
4. There are no original plans or views of the 1767-78 structure, nor are there any known copies of the plans prepared by Dixon and Davis for the 1867 work. Contemporary records describe the early structure as "a house built for the purpose of a Ball Room" (1816-1830 Chancery Case No. 58, not recorded) and as a "one story brick building". The 1768 deed (IB 1/29) from Tasker to the Lord Baltimore refers to the "whole house lately erected and known by the name of Proprietary Office". The ground plan of the post Civil War structure is shown on the G.M. Hopkins Atlas of Annapolis dated 1878. An 1887 description states that "one room is now used for the meeting of the City Council, other departments for balls and social gatherings, and one portion as the (fire) department headquarters. The supper room was formerly the Revenue Office of the Province". (Elihu S. Riley, The Ancient City, a History of Annapolis in Maryland, Annapolis, 1887, page 305.)
5. The one-story 18th Century structure was raised to two stories and the front facade altered to the Italianate in 1867 (see Part II A). The structure was virtually gutted in the interior (except the Ballroom) for new city offices, and a large addition made at the rear in 1974, Arthur Love, Architect. Plans for this work are available at the City Engineer's Office.

B. Historical Context

As mentioned, the initial phase of the present day Municipal Building was built in 1767 as a Ballroom/Assembly Room(s), with a revenue office called "His Lordship's Receiver General's Office" at the southeast part. The Ballroom was used for various public functions as well as a place of assembly, and c.1772 housed the Maryland Legislature. In 1802 the State general assembly

was petitioned to vest title of the "Ball House to the Corporation and their Successors, for the use of the City of Annapolis". The structure was rented (illegally) by John Shaw to Anne Arundel County for use as the County Court between 1816 and 1830, and was occupied by Federal troops during the Civil War. This occupation resulted in a claim filed by the city against the United States Government for back rent and damages, including a fire, to the Assembly Room. The city received \$ 6218. (1866 Annapolis Corporation Proceedings, 26/72, 89, 92, 95; 3/12, 29, 6/25/ 1866). Dixon and Davis submitted plans to alter the structure in 1866, changed in 1867 to raise the height to two stories (financed partially with a \$ 6000 loan to "complete work on the Ballroom". Specific rooms were set aside for the permanent use of the city in 1868. The Independent Fire Company No.2 located here in 1884, altering the first two bays of the first floor to include a large opening for a door to house the steam engine. This change was corrected with the 1974 restoration program.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of Exterior

Originally a one-story brick structure of two parts, the northwest section 96' in length, the southeast 20', the present appearance of the Municipal Building dates from the 1867 alterations and additions made by Dixon and Davis, Architects, who had been asked to "rebuild the Ball Room so as to have it consist of two stories instead of one" (Annapolis Corporation Proceedings, Aug. 1866-Feb 1867). It would appear that design details of the 18th Century Ballroom were removed at this time and reinstalled in the new, second floor room. The exterior appearance, with the exception of 18thC brickwork in parts of both end walls, was completely altered with the 1867 changes.

The Municipal Building now appears as two separate but attached structures, both two stories in height, both rectangular in plan. The northwest section is 73'x 33' with a five bay front facade, the southeast part 44'6" x 33', also five bays in design. The larger section, which includes the relocated Ballroom, has a standing seam terne cross gable roof, with a round vent opening in the street gable, now infilled and stuccoed. The entire roof along the Duke of Gloucester Street elevation is defined by an excellent wood cornice consisting of an ogee bed mold to a flat architrave that is enriched by a continuous row of carved and pierced tabs below the frieze. The frieze has a row of deep, elaborately sawn and carved volute consoles below the projecting corona with cyma recta crown mold. The front facade is divided into five bays by projecting brick pilaster strips that

start at a stucco on brick base and brick watertable, and terminates just below the roof cornice. The wall and pilasters are laid in pressed brick, common bond 7:1.

The central entrance is reached by a run of three granite steps on a brick base. The rectangular door opening is protected by an excellent wood hoodmold, consisting of a quirked cyma reversa crown mold on a flat fascia, supported by scroll brackets at either end. The paneled jambs, soffit, transom and double doors are c.1974. The two bays at either side of the entrance, and the five bays at the second floor have wood 6/6 double hung sash with torus molded casings and wood lug sills (torus on cavetto). The windows have the same hoods as the entrance bay. The first two bays at the first floor were altered in 1884 when the Independent Fire Compnay No.2 relocated in this building. Both windows were removed along with the interveining pilaster strip to permit the installation of a large door to give access to the interior for the steam engine.

The north end wall of this section is blind except for a window opening in the gable end. The high watertable is stucco on brick, scored as ashlar. The upper wall is partially laid with hand made bricks in English bond, with the 1867 front facade toothed in at the corner. That part of the rear wall not hidden by the 1974 addition has two windows at the first level, duplicating the details of the front windows, and two blind windows at the upper level, now bricked in. The lower part of the wall is of hand made brick laid in English bond, the rest in common bond, 7:1. The excellent bracketed roof cornice returns at the end walls and is repeated for the full length of the rear wall. The south end wall of this section is obscured by the southeast section of the structure.

The southeast section of the front elevation has a stand-seam hipped roof with a later, flat fascia cornice board. The wall has been refaced with pressed brick, c.1910. laid in Flemish bond, with burnt headers. The entrance, which occupies the second and third bays, has a semi-elliptical opening, recased with a heavy torus molded architrave. The double doors and transom are c.1974. The entrance is served by a full width flight of three granite steps. The first, fourth and fifth bays of the first floor have tall 6/6 wood double hung windows with torus mold casings and bracketed limestone lug sills. The splayed brick arches at the window heads are constructed of alternating stretchers on headers, with paneled limestone keys. The second floor windows are similar in detail but are not as tall. The second and third bays of the second floor were replaced in 1974, correcting early 20thC changes to this part of the wall that resulted in a double window.

There is no watertable or base, and no belt courses at this wall. The south end wall is laid partially in English bond, using hand made brick. The foundation is rubble, with galleting typical of a number of the large residences of this period in Annapolis. There is a later concrete parging as a base. The gable has two corbeled courses of headers as a raking cornice.

Both parts of the structure are of masonry construction, with timber floor and roof systems.

B. Description of the Interior

The interior of the Municipal Building, with the exception of the Council Chambers at the second floor, has been completely altered c.1974 when the city added to the rear of the structure and refinished all offices and public spaces. The first floor of the original structure now has a lobby off the south entrance, with stairs to the second floor and a passage to the rear addition. A treasurer's office is south of the lobby. The north part of the original structure has six new offices, four of which are served directly by a hall and diamond plan lobby off the north entrance. All walls at this floor have been furred out and drywalled, all ceilings are suspended tile, and the steel doors are new. The main lobby at the south end has a quarry tile floor, the rest of the floors are carpeted.

The second floor at the southeast part is also c.1974 in finish, with drywall construction, suspended tile ceilings and carpeted floors. The Council Chamber, however, which occupies all of the northwest section of the 1867 two story structure, is exceptional, and it appears that much of the 18thC detailing used in the Ballroom has been reused here. The room has five windows in the Duke of Gloucester Street elevation, double doors to the lobby in the south wall, and a blind north wall. The five windows in the rear wall have been closed off but are expressed at the exposed brick wall in the rear hall. The central window opening has been widened to accommodate later double doors to this rear hall. The wall areas between the window openings have been enriched by rectangular paneling that is defined with banded oak leaf bolection molding with egg and dart margins. There are six such panels at the street wall, three at the blind north wall, four at the south wall and eight at the east or rear wall.

The plaster walls are finished at the wood floors with tall wood bases with molded caps, and have deep chair rails that incorporate torus on cavetto leading edges. The excellent coved plaster ceiling with its domed light well in the center is surrounded by a 24" deep cornice, consisting of a cavetto bed mold, a flat frieze with heavy dentils, a stepped fascia with a cavetto mold below the projecting corona, and a cyma recta on ovolo crown mold.

The window jambs are battered, and cased with heavily molded architraves.

C. Site

The Municipal Building faces west along Duke of Gloucester Street. The original rectangular structure has an "L" plan addition to the rear, 81'x 51' 6", inset from the north end wall. A large multi-story city owned parking deck is to the rear of the complex, with the area between the deck and the structure, and the narrow front and side yards planted in grass. There is minimal landscaping.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings

The only architectural drawings that remain are the 1974 alteration and additions, which do have an accurate plan of the original floor layouts as well as as built elevations.

B. Early Views

The earliest known view of this structure is reproduced in *The Train's Been Done and Gone* (see Bibliography) as a plate on page 86 entitled "Municipal Building, Duke of Gloucester Street. Its date is c. 1890. Now other views, engravings etc have been discovered.

C. Bibliography

1. Primary Sources

Annapolis Corporation Proceedings, various dates,
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2. Secondary Sources

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Warren, Marion E. and Elizabeth Warren, An Annapolis Portrait, 1859-1910, "The Train's Benn Done and Gone"
David R. Godine, Boston, 1976

White, Evangeline, The Years Between. privately published,
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Files of Historic Annapolis, Inc, 194 Prince George
Street, Annapolis

D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

None.

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